San Francisco Chronicle
THE VOICE OF THE WEST

EDITORIALS

Progress on Headwaters — But Questions Remain

THE DEAL to preserve Humboldt County's Headwaters Forest — deeply entangled in emotions as well as economics and biology — edged closer to reality this week. It is, however, way too early to declare this a done deal — or a good deal.

Hurwitz can pick and choose $380 million worth of surplus assets

Federal and state officials have offered Texas financier Charles Hurwitz a buffet of government assets in exchange for 7,500 acres of the Headwaters Forest, the core of which is the largest groves of virgin redwoods still in private hands. Hurwitz can pick and choose $380 million worth of the surplus assets.

The list of goodies in front of Hurwitz, who gained control of Pacific Lumber and hence the Headwaters in a 1986 hostile takeover, includes Kern County land with oil and gas wells, thousands of acres of the Sierra Nevada, farmland, shoreline properties and even San Francisco's Transbay Terminal and adjacent office buildings.

The deal, of course, could fall apart if Hurwitz — a hard-bargaining former stockbroker who built an international conglomerate based on natural resources and real estate — and government negotiators cannot agree on the value of the surplus assets.

It is not pleasant to deal with Hurwitz, given the way he threatened to send logging crews into the Headwaters and the fact that federal authorities are still pursuing him for his role in the 1988 failure of a Texas thrift, a debacle that cost taxpayers $1.6 billion. But saving the Headwaters is worth the anguish.

State legislators and members of Congress should hold hearings to review the economic and environmental value of the surplus assets. Hurwitz should get fair-market value for the Headwaters, but no windfall for his game of hostage.

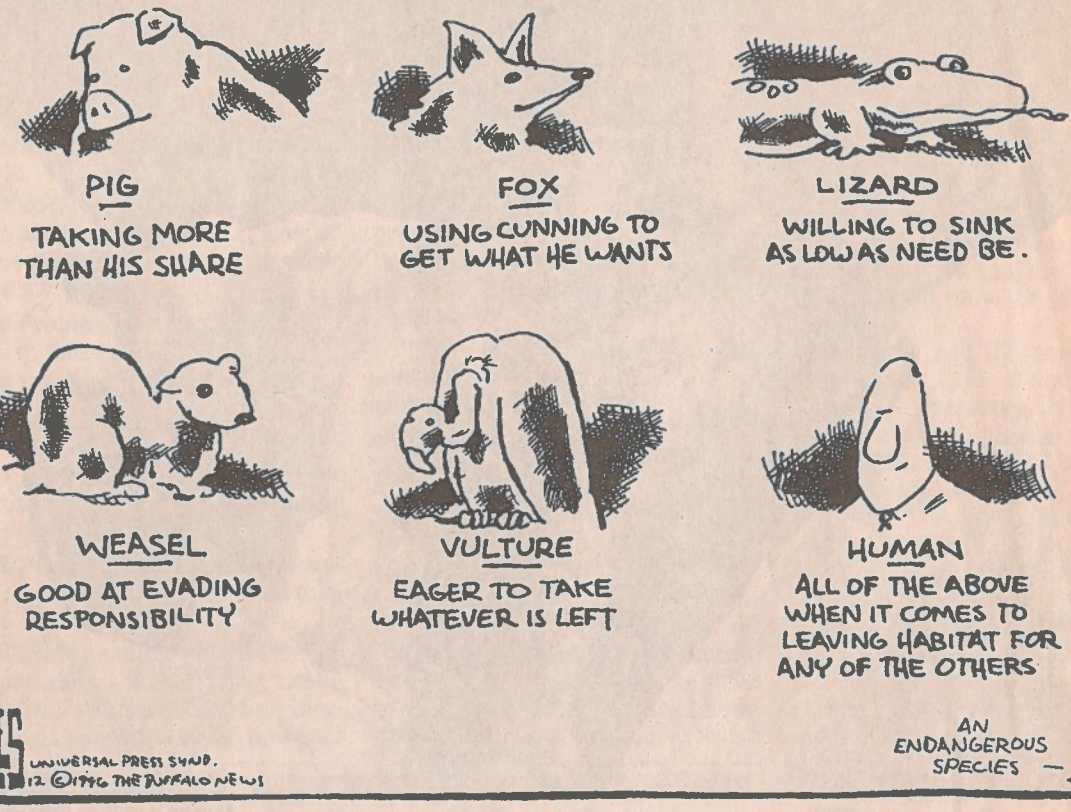
Expand the Farmers' Market

EVERY WEEKEND the crowds arrive, thousands turning up to pick and choose among the vegetables, breads, jams and fruit laid out on tailgates and card tables at a farmers' market in front of the Ferry Building. Now comes an appealing plan to move the whole show inside the underused waterfront landmark, if a skeptical Port Commission can be convinced.

The San Francisco Public Market Collaborative now sponsors a Saturday market on a homely waterfront parking lot. The market has outgrown its site, attracting 10,000 shoppers and is ready for the big time. A permanent home would mean quarters for bakeries, delicatessens and meat markets, plus open hours during the rest of the week.

This attractive plan gives port leaders pause. For years the Ferry Building was shopped to developers, but plans always fell apart. Now as the port readies a new development package, it is worried the market will chase away bidders uncertain about its chances. But throngs of people on the waterfront and fresh food make for a popular

Animal Traits



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why Today's Kids Are Selfish and Troubled

Editor — Reading the article, "Baby Boomers Are Wimpy as Parents, Experts Say," was dismaying. I wonder if these people who advocate getting tough with children consider other important contributions (besides permissiveness) to the problems of "a generation of selfish, ill-mannered, troubled children?"

It seems these "experts" need to consider the following:

The TV shows, movies, music and materialistic messages that our culture bombards children with.

The impact of so many parents being preoccupied with their own activities and problems that they are so fatigued and stressed that the children feel like excess baggage.

The fact that troubling behavior can also be caused by parental neglect, abuse, a lack of understanding of child growth and development, poor role modeling, hopelessness and despair, to

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ning with the choice of subject matter itself. Is "culture and lifestyle in Napa County" truly a priority topic for programming that best serves the station's audience?

These are tough times for public television stations everywhere. It is understandable that PBS stations, including KQED, need to be innovative and creative in fund-raising no less than in programming. KQED's leadership must no doubt confront this challenge, but not by compromising standards, ethics or programming choices.

Without a critical self-examination and a review of station policies and procedures, KQED stands to lose far more than the Mondavi project. It stands to lose the trust and confidence of the community it purports to serve and whose support it presumably needs.

IRV DRASNIN
Los Altos

should not squeeze this peach of an idea.

AS I SEE IT *Cynthia Tucker*

Guns Are 'the Hazard,' Not Air Bags

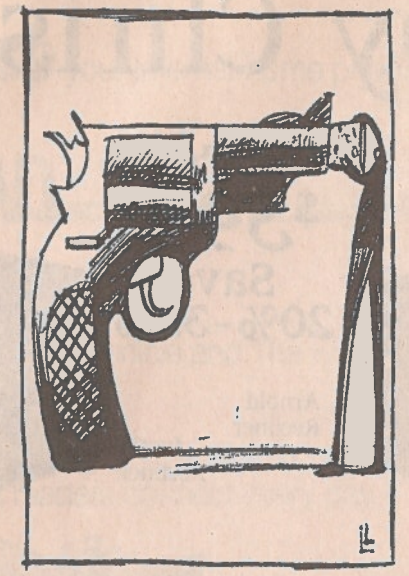
THE DEBATE over air bags is curious. From all the controversy, you'd think air bags were the dumbest invention since helium-powered dirigibles. In fact, there are far more dangerous gadgets around than air bags. Handguns are among them.

It is a peculiar feature of American life that we routinely misjudge risks. Americans are horrified by the crash of a commercial airliner, but ignore the carnage on our roadways. We fret over the health risks posed by electric power lines and cellular phones while we gorge on hamburgers and french fries, which are more likely to be damaging in the long run.

We demand that the federal government do something about the risks associated with air bags, but we say little about the hazards posed by handguns. Even if you leave out homicides and suicides, the accidental death toll from handguns is still overwhelming —about a thousand Americans a year, most of them children and adolescents.

Because of pressure from the gun manufacturers, Congress has exempted guns from regulation by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. As a result, guns are subject to fewer safety regulations than automobiles, baby cribs or bicycles. Toy guns are more strictly regulated than real guns.

Shouldn't a product that is lethal in its proper use be subject to rigid safety regulations? Isn't it



common sense to require that manufacturers make guns safer by adding features that would make it impossible for a 5-year-old to shoot a 3-year-old?

There is technology available to make handguns safer. In fact, gun manufacturers have known how to diminish the risk of accidental shootings — especially by children — since the 1880s. Between 1886 and 1940, according to the Johns Hopkins University Center for Gun Policy and Research, Smith & Wesson produced nearly 500,000 child-resistant guns, manufactured with an additional lever on the grip of the gun that had to be depressed simultaneously with the trigger.

Today, gun owners may purchase trigger locks and load indicators, which are helpful. But the smartest policy, according to the Center for Gun Policy, would be to require manufacturers to make the guns with the safety devices already installed.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins recommend a "personalized" gun that could be fired only by the owner. It might be activated by a touch memory system — say, a ring on the owner's hand. And Colt has developed a prototype activated by a radio frequency ID.

This sophisticated technology is expensive — at least for now. And of course, gun manufacturers will complain that forcing them to market such expensive technology will drive up the costs of handguns and put them out of business. Haven't we heard that before? Didn't automobile manufacturers say that about air bags?

There is no doubt that air bags can be hazardous, especially if misused. The National Highway Transportation Safety Board should require automobile manufacturers to construct air bags that inflate with less force. And the agency should do everything possible to educate motorists about the proper use of air bags.

But if you're worried about the safety of your loved ones, think of this: In the past decade, air bags have killed 51 people. During the same period, handguns have accidentally killed more than 10,000.

Chronicle Features

Cynthia Tucker is editorial page editor of the Atlanta Constitution.

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Getting tough, without considering other aspects of parenting such as maturity, warmth, self-respect, and a greater desire to raise a happy, well-functioning, healthy human being than to indulge one's own whims can backfire.

Too many people listen to "experts" with simplistic solutions to complicated problems.

DOROTHY DIMITRE
Millbrae

Honor

Editor — (In memory of the Arizona.)

The enemy flew with no sound,
Toward its target, yet so unaware;
It struck with the stealth of a snake,
At the ships that lay peacefully there;
Is it an honor to die with your shipmates,
To go down with a ship that you love?
Is it an honor to give up your life,
That your flag may still flutter above?
There was horror which we can't relate to;
There was grief which a pen cannot chart;
There's a memory sunk in the harbor,
And engraved in America's heart;
Though shattering the peace of the country,
War united us all into one;
Together we fought for man's freedom,
Fought bravely till battle was done;
But all I can give is a poem,
To those men buried down in the sand,
To the men who well deserve honor,
They've united this brave and free land;
And always there will be a scar,
For the war did indeed take its toll;
And always we will honor those
Whose names are inscribed on our soul!

SARA HUMPHREY, 12
Pleasant Hill

Win-Win for the Tern

Editor — It was disappointing to see your December 2 article on the closing of Alameda Naval Air Station and the endangered California Least Tern framed as a jobs versus environment issue. Many recent studies have shown that preserving our environment is good for the economy, not a hindrance. An economic study commissioned by the Golden Gate Audubon Society in 1994 shows that tourism generated by an Alameda National Wildlife Refuge could generate $14 million yearly, and possibly more with a little advertising effort.

We believe that the creation of an Alameda National Wildlife Refuge will be a win-win situation for the citizens of Alameda and the Bay Area. It can provide a boost to the economy, a wonderful opportunity for wildlife interpretive and public educational experiences that are sadly lacking in the central bay, and public access to the impressive views, all while avoiding the traffic gridlock Alameda residents rightly fear. We get all of that while helping to save the California Least Tern, a bird species whose very existence is threatened because we have taken away its traditional nesting grounds. And there will still be over 1,200 acres available for other forms of reuse.

DEBEY ZITO, president
Golden Gate Audubon Society
Berkeley

Critical View of KQED

Editor — KQED did the right thing in canceling the "Mondavi Project" but it would be wrong to let it go at that. Some important issues have been raised which call for further discussion, made all the more urgent by the station's attempt to rationalize, justify and defend what never should have happened in the first place.

What is stunning is that a majority of the board and station executives apparently have no problem with using wine industry money for such a project. Either KQED programming is "for sale" to interested parties or it isn't. What would be even more alarming than the revelation that KQED and its board don't understand this would be the discovery that nobody cares.

That KQED's relationship with Mr. Mondavi and the Mondavi-financed American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts violated the spirit if not the letter of PBS guidelines and ethical standards is something any KQED administrator, producer or board member should know and understand.

What's more, KQED's leadership should be concerned and knowledgeable enough to raise some additional questions, begin-

In Defense of Mondavi

Editor — It's a cheap shot when anyone uses facts selectively to create an unfavorable impression. I'm referring to The Chronicle's articles, "Focus on Ethics at KQED," and the supposed heavy-handed tactics attributed to Robert Mondavi.

It would be comic if it wasn't so insulting. Not only to Bob Mondavi, who doesn't deserve it, but to the hundreds of thousands of people active in wine, food and the arts worldwide.

Perhaps the comic part is that no good deed goes unpunished. Bob's tireless energies as a successful businessman and wine visionary, who shaped the California fine wine industry, are well known. His generous and open-handed spirit is reflected in numerous philanthropic contributions. And, his leadership in helping to raise funds for diverse causes and community makes a proud record.

Media ethics are important. However, by pitting public versus private interests, this story obfuscates two critical questions for PBS: (1) how to assure funding for public broadcasting stations, and (2) should cultural lifestyle programs be held to the same standards as controversial ones?

If the current guidelines are inadequate, then they need to be fixed. Cheap shots at Bob Mondavi hardly encourage the community to support KQED in any way, certainly not I.

PATRICIA SCHNEIDER
Sausalito

Battling Burger King

Editor — "Neighborhood Wages Battle of the Burger" (Chronicle, November 27), quotes Burger King franchise owner Eddie Szeto asking how a few merchants can thwart the desires of Inner Sunset neighborhood residents to choose Burger King. Mr. Szeto is mistaken about us.

Hundreds of Inner Sunset residents rightly fear that our neighborhood will lose its unique charm and identity as international chains attempt to turn it into a "strip mall." Many residents from the Inner Sunset, as well as those from other neighborhoods, will attend a December 13 Board of Supervisors hearing to defend the quality of life that San Francisco neighborhoods have up until now been famous for.

LEN COLEMAN
San Francisco

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Fax Cover Sheet

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Message Re: my letter of 12/2/96

After reading your story this morning on the pronouncement of KQED's board on the Mondavi project, I suppose I shouldn't have removed this sentence from the end of my second paragraph:

"What would be even more alarming than the revelation that KQED and its board don't understand this would be the discovery that nobody cares."

(And the fact that station representatives would find in this apparent indifference a justification for its actions is more alarming still.)

Regards.

Irv

December 2, 1996

To the Editor:

KQED did the right thing in canceling the "Mondavi project" but it would be wrong to let it go at that. Some important issues have been raised which call for further discussion, made all the more urgent by the station's attempt to rationalize, justify and defend what never should have happened in the first place.

What is stunning is that a majority of the board and station executives apparently have no problem with using wine industry money for such a project. That it is "not Frontline or 60 Minutes" is irrelevant. Either KQED programming is "for sale" to interested parties or it isn't, regardless of whether it's 1% or 100% of programming costs.

In broadcasting as in print, credibility is everything and it is not altered by the type of non-fiction program being broadcast. Credibility depends on how the subject of *any* non-fiction program -- news, public affairs, or cultural -- is financed, produced and covered.

That KQED's relationship with Mr. Mondavi and the Mondavi-financed American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts violated the spirit if not the letter of PBS guidelines and ethical standards is something any KQED administrator, producer or board member should know and understand.

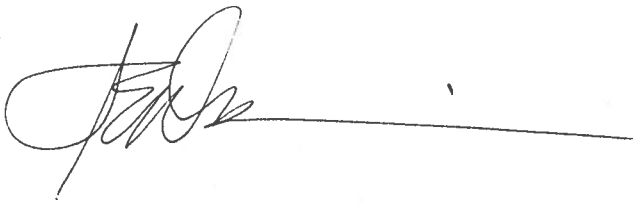
What's more, KQED's leadership should be concerned and knowledgeable enough to raise some additional questions, beginning with the choice of subject matter itself. Is "culture and lifestyle in Napa County" truly a priority topic for programming that best serves the station's audience? It would be different if KQED was broadcasting a wide range of relevant locally-produced documentaries covering a wide spectrum of issues and interests -- but that's hardly the case.

Secondly, the projected $550-600,000 cost of a one-hour documentary, especially for a subject so close to home, is at best questionable. It should not cost more than one-half to two-thirds that amount to produce a well-researched, high quality hour.

These are tough times for public television stations everywhere. It is understandable that PBS stations, including KQED, need to be innovative and creative in fund-raising no less than in programming. KQED's leadership must no doubt confront this challenge but not by compromising standards, ethics or programming choices. As a public television station, perhaps it is time for a public airing of KQED's mission, its programming and its role in the community.

Without a critical self-examination and a review of station policies and procedures, KQED stands to lose far more than the Mondavi Project. It stands to lose the trust and confidence of the community it purports to serve and whose support it presumably needs.

Irv Drasnin



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